

# MENTOR GUIDELINES AND CODE OF CONDUCT

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**CONGRATULATIONS!** As a mentor, you are now about to begin one of life's most rewarding and fulfilling experiences. Your commitment indicates that you believe in the worth and dignity of young people. You recognize the magnitude of the responsibility that you accepted in choosing to work with youth and agree to interact appropriately with your mentee according to the highest ethical standards at all times.

Be yourself! Please read the following guidelines carefully:

## YOUR ROLE AS A MENTOR

- At the initial stages of the match, your mentee may appear to be hesitant, unresponsive, and unappreciative of the mentor relationship. This "guarded" attitude is simply a manifestation of his/her insecurity about the relationship. The mentee's attitude will gradually take a positive turn as he/she realizes your sincerity about being a friend. **BE PATIENT!** Don't try to speed up the process by going out of your way to accommodate your mentee; such as seeing your mentee more than the prescribed one hour per week.
- Remember the mentor/mentee relationship has an initial phase. During this phase the mentee is more interested in getting to know how "real" you are and how much they can trust you. Establish where you can reach your mentee: by phone, e-mail, fax, or a designated meeting location. Experience proves calling or e-mailing your mentee at school is usually the best way to make contact. Establish a time and phone number where you can usually answer calls or make contact. Mentees need encouragement to leave messages on your voice mail to confirm meetings as well as to cancel them.
- Don't try to be: teacher, parent, disciplinarian, therapist, Santa Claus, or a babysitter. Experience demonstrates it is counterproductive to assume roles other than a dependable, consistent friend. Present information carefully without distortion and give all points of view a fair hearing. Listen carefully and offer possible solutions without passing judgement. Don't criticize or preach. Think of ways to problem solve together rather than lecturing or telling the mentee what to do. Never "should on" your mentee.
- Respect the uniqueness and honor the integrity of your mentee and influence them through constructive feedback. The mentor empowers the mentee to make "right" decisions without actually deciding for the mentee. Identify the mentee's interests and take them seriously. Be alert for opportunities and "teaching moments." Explore positive and negative consequences.
- Set realistic expectations and goals for your mentee and try to make the achievement for them fun. Remember there is a big difference between ENCOURAGING and DEMANDING. Encourage your mentee to complete their secondary education, pursue high learning or vocational goals, and provide access to varying points of view. Assist in making the connection between his/her actions of today and the dreams and goals of tomorrow. Don't get discouraged if the mentee isn't turning his/her life around or making great improvements. Mentors have a great deal of impact – it's not always immediately evident. Look for signs such as increased school attendance, improved grades, showing up for meetings, expressing appreciation.
- As a friend you can share and advise but know your limitations. Problems that your mentee may share with you regarding substance abuse, molestation and physical abuse are best handled by professionals. If you have any concerns, **CONTACT THE MENTOR COORDINATOR IMMEDIATELY.**

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- Always be supportive of the parent – even when you may disagree. Don't take sides or make judgements concerning any family conflict or situation. Leave the parenting to the parent. Foster a professional relationship with your mentee. Do not accept gifts or favors that might impair or appear to impair professional judgement. Do not offer any favor, service or thing of value to obtain special advantage.

## DISCIPLINE

There may be instances when your mentee's behavior is unacceptable. Again, remember the parent is responsible for the child's discipline. The following is to be used if the parent is not around to assume the responsibility for their child's behavior. Don't forget to inform the parent about the steps you took and why you took them.

- NEVER physically discipline.
- NEVER use abusive language.
- Don't use ultimatums.
- Most children will listen and respond to reason. Explain to your mentee why you find his/her behavior unacceptable.
- Don't give your mentee the "silent treatment" to solve the problem. Discuss your concerns.
- On very rare occasions, your child may need to be taken back home because of unacceptable behavior. Before taking this action, tell him/her what you are doing and why you made the decision. Taking your mentee back home because of his/her behavior doesn't necessarily mean the match (relationship) has ended. Before you leave make sure the child understands they will see you again and that you are not using their behavior as a pretext to abandon the relationship.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Protect the health and safety of your mentee and seek advice from school faculty or program staff whenever in doubt about the appropriateness of an event or activity and inform school or program staff of any persons, situations or activities which could affect the health and safety of the child.

- DO NOT use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs when with your mentee.
- DO NOT have firearms or weapons present while with your mentee.
- Always wear seat belts while in the car.
- Have adequate personal liability and automobile insurance coverage.
- Ensure your mentee has all the necessary protective items and is well-supervised on outings.
- DO NOT leave your mentee alone or with strangers.
- If you have become aware that your mentee's safety or the safety of another is in jeopardy through disclosure (i.e., child abuse, sexual abuse, etc.), report your concern to the mentor coordinator or teacher immediately. Let your mentee know that you are required to do so. This issue should always be discussed at the beginning of the relationship to inform the mentee of your obligation to report safety concerns.

## ACTIVITIES AND MONEY

- Taking the first step in planning activities is primarily your responsibility; however, ask your mentee to help make decisions or have them plan an activity.

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- The mentor/mentee match is a “one on one” relationship which takes time to build. Try to avoid bringing someone else when you are with your mentee. However, you may include others (i.e., spouse, friends, other mentees/mentors and relatives) from time to time.
- While this program is mainly to assist your mentee with career exploration, tutoring, self-esteem, etc., there may be activities that you may want to attend that cost money. Consult with your mentee about cost and find out how they will pay. You can assist them in paying their share, but we encourage you to discuss costs of activities with the parents.
- Entertainment is not the focal point of your relationship. Do not spend an exorbitant amount of money for activities, birthday presents, etc.
- Always call your mentee before your scheduled meeting or appointment to remind him/her. Be sure you have parental approval for activities that take place away from school premises.
- Return your mentee home at the agreed upon time. If you are unable to or there is a change in plans, always call the parent to let them know.

## PROGRAM RULES

- No overnight stays.
- Discussions between you and your mentee are considered confidential. Be careful about sensitive personal issues. The mentee’s personal or family life may be difficult to discuss, particularly early in the relationship. Your mentee may be ashamed of poor school performance, family culture and religion, financial problems, etc. It is important not to measure the success of the relationship by the extent of the mentee’s disclosure.
- If you have a concern you feel is beyond your ability call the mentor coordinator even if it seems trivial. There is no reason to feel helpless or hopeless.

## YOUR MEASURE OF SUCCESS

- Your success is measured by many milestones.

Your mentee may realize, for the first time that they:	A good indication is...
✓ have potential	✓ they are setting goals. ✓ developing new skills. ✓ aware of time management.
✓ are confident and self-assure,	✓ increased cooperation with parents, teachers and peers. ✓ behavioral changes.
✓ value education and the learning process, and	✓ increase in school attendance. ✓ improved grades. ✓ Respect for teachers.
✓ are capable young people.	✓ A willingness to help others. ✓ Ability to see future. ✓ Ability to plan for college.

- Never compare the success of your relationship with another mentor/mentee match. Everyone develops at a different pace and under different circumstances.

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- Your mentee will reward you by giving you notes, e-mails or simply through conversation. They may tell you how “great” you are, how you might have helped them with a specific problem and so much more. It may be big or small. Whatever the compliment, know that what you are doing has had a significant impact on the future of this child.
- You will work with your mentee to establish mutual respect, friendship, motivation, and measurable goals. Please don’t hesitate to ask questions if you find any part of the guidelines unclear or confusing. The mentor coordinator is available to assist you in any way possible.

Your commitment and dedication to your mentee may be the most profound opportunity that you may experience. The quality of the relationship you build directly influences the life and future of the child. Please exert every effort to maintain professional standards, improve your mentor skills, and exercise good judgement when engaged in any activity involving your mentee.

Mentoring is not a panacea for all the problems/decisions facing your mentee and their families. The essence of mentoring is the sustained human relationship: a one on one relationship that shows a child that he/she is valued as a person and is important to society.

YOU ARE A:

**POSITIVE ROLE MODEL  
FRIEND  
COACH  
ADVISOR  
SELF-ESTEEM BUILDER  
CAREER COUNSELOR  
AND  
ADVOCATE**